

For God and Country: Religious Minorities Striving for National Belonging through Community Service

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On Saturday, August 30, 2014, Muslim Americans from across the nation boarded buses bound for some of Detroit's blighted west-side neighborhoods. The bus riders, participants in the Community Service Program at the fifty-first annual convention of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), the largest Muslim organization on the continent, spent the morning learning about Muslim-led community service initiatives in the city and then choosing between an hour and a half of either urban gardening or urban housing restoration. 2014 was not the first year that ISNA emphasized community service at its convention. In fact, nearly one thousand attendees that year signed up for ISNA's fifteenth annual Community Service Recognition Luncheon, which culminated with the bestowal of the Mahboob Khan Community Service Award. Yet in 2014, for the first time, ISNA leaders provided attendees the opportunity, through direct community service work, to enact their roles as productive citizens in a national body politic.

ISNA's directors had only recently begun to emphasize community service in these more expansive terms. Between 2013 and 2014, for example, ISNA Development Foundation officials and Founder's Committee members changed the description of the Community Service Recognition Luncheon to make it clear that such service should be undertaken on behalf of people of all religions. Whereas 2013 convention materials described the lunch as an event where "the nation's Muslim leaders, scholars, and government officials join to honor an individual dedicated to community service *within the Muslim community*," the Annual Convention Program description of the 2014 luncheon—at which former President and Nobel Prize Winner Jimmy Carter delivered the keynote—omitted that last clause, turning service into a broader national mandate.¹

In addition to sincere conviction and the desire to encourage other Muslim Americans to live out their own ethical commitments,

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many Muslim leaders believed that such community service engagements would help overcome discrimination by demonstrating to non-Muslims that, like Jews and Catholics who faced discrimination in the past, Muslim Americans could make vital contributions to the United States.² The emphasis on service as a road to eventual acceptance was not new in 2014. In fact, it was so pronounced among Muslim leaders in 2010 that Daisy Khan—then one of the leaders of the contested Manhattan Islamic Center project erroneously dubbed the “Ground Zero Mosque”—put forth the service-as-assimilation narrative during the height of that controversy. “All religions Americanize over time,” Khan told reporter Christiane Amanpour in an August 22, 2010, episode of *This Week*. “They go from a place of worship to a place of service, and community centers have been developed by Christian communities like the YMCA, and the Jewish community has developed the JCC. And [the] Muslim community is inevitably going to also develop such a center.”

Long before the Islamic Center controversy, even, Khan’s husband—Feisal Abdul Rauf, the imam first associated with the Islamic Center Project—had suggested that community service endeavors would aid in the integration of Muslims. In fact, he included this idea in his larger 2004 book about how Muslim Americans, following the example of Catholics and Jews, could “Americanize” and help turn the United States from a “Judeo-Christian” (Protestant-Catholic-Jewish) country into an “Abrahamic” (Muslim-Christian-Jewish) one.³ It remains to be seen whether such service projects will aid Muslim Americans in gaining recognition and acceptance from non-Muslims. As I discuss in the conclusion to this article, several contemporary factors—unaccounted for in these hopeful narratives—call that possibility into question. Before conjecturing on that issue, though, it is worth investigating how and to what extent appeals to particular kinds of service actually have enabled other religious minorities to lay claim to American identity or to receive recognition as part of the U.S. “Judeo-Christian” fold.

This article examines how participation in twentieth-century government-affiliated service programs—sometimes voluntary, sometimes compulsory—helped religious minorities assert claims to faith in a common God, observance of common ethics, and belonging in a common body politic. Historians have described World War II as a time of enshrining “Judeo-Christian” narratives in culture, legislation, and politics, and of allowing Jews greater—though still limited—access to these arenas than they had experienced previously. Due largely to participation in the armed forces, the argument goes, religious and racial minorities gradually gained increasing social acceptance during

the twentieth century.⁴ While participation in the military is important to this account, my primary subject is the service provided outside of the armed forces: service religious groups initially offered as a complement to military activity as early as World War I, but then expanded and generalized—sometimes under government commission—into community care work that often relieved the state of the economic burden of supplying certain citizenship benefits or that gave international endeavors a friendlier face. Marginalized white Protestants were the first to offer such services, but other minoritized religious groups—primarily white ethnic Catholics and Jews—followed their example, patriotically echoing military themes throughout the twentieth century when creating “service” organizations and volunteer “corps” to assert national belonging by emphasizing that—like dominant white Protestants—their religious ethics led to serving the nation and serving the needy, too.

In providing such services, which ranged from staffing domestic soup kitchens to distributing relief supplies abroad, marginalized Jews and Christians demonstrated their loyalties to the United States. After World War II, Muslims—some of whom had served in the military and others who immigrated in later decades—sought to have their civic contributions recognized, as well, and helped make community service the proving grounds for claims that the United States could be an “Abrahamic” country, rather than just a “Judeo-Christian” one.

In the Service of Civilizing

Although service of different kinds (missionary, civil, social, and—especially—military) has long informed what could be considered truly American and truly religious, it was only during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries that marginalized religious groups began emphasizing their Americanness in such terms. Participation in the armed forces was not the only means by which nondominant Americans could demonstrate their national loyalty, but it was by far the most accessible. While “civil service” was a highly esteemed vocation, such occupations were primarily reserved for elites. The Pendleton Civil Service Reform Act of 1883 helped to change that situation—known as the “spoils system,” in which civil service jobs were doled out as political favors rather than on the basis of merit—by instituting measures to ensure the qualifications of federal employees. By 1920, more than 70 percent of federal government positions were assigned based on civil service exams, though women and racial and religious minorities were not generally encouraged to sit for them—particularly not after segregationist President Woodrow Wilson worked

to expunge black Americans from the ranks of civil servants, thus devastating the lives and holdings of hundreds, if not thousands, who had only recently worked their ways into the lower middle class.⁵

“Service to mankind” was also an important turn-of-the-century theme—one under which Gilded Age industrialists financed Progressive Era efforts to address the severe social problems that accompanied U.S. economic and territorial expansion. By doing so, some industrialists also attempted to deflect accusations of immoderate accumulation, monopolistic activity, and unfair labor practices. Andrew Carnegie, for example, established several philanthropic institutions between 1896 and 1911, when the Carnegie Corporation of New York (designed to handle philanthropic endowments left over from the 1901 sale of Carnegie Steel) received a state charter. Influenced by Carnegie’s call for more systematized giving (and while fighting an antitrust suit that would ultimately break up Standard Oil), John D. Rockefeller signed over nearly 75,000 shares of his company in 1909 to the trustees of his proposed foundation. Four years later, New York Governor William Sulzer granted Rockefeller a legal charter for the foundation “to promote the well-being of mankind throughout the world.”⁶

Equipped with the redirected largess of the Gilded Age, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century public leaders ranging from missionaries to political officials—often citing the noble ideals of “service to humanity” and “social service”—attempted to assimilate non-“white” non-Protestants (Native Americans, freed slaves moving north for jobs in industry, and non-Protestant immigrants arriving on U.S. shores). For dominant Americans at that time, progress and Protestantism went hand in hand, and the massive influx of Jews and Catholics from Europe and non-Protestant religious groups from Asia seemed to threaten American might. Social and civic acceptance almost invariably required being—or, at least, seeming—middle-class, Protestant, and white.⁷ One leader in the new “social service” sector was Josiah Strong, the Protestant clergyman and reformer who insisted on the need to “civilize and Christianize” immigrants and Native Americans so as to protect the “Anglo-Saxon” race. Strong established his League for Social Service in 1898.⁸ By 1906, the re-named American Institute of Social Service claimed “forty members and one hundred associates, American men and women distinguished in social, philanthropic, and religious work,” as well as “one hundred collaborators” overseas.⁹

By the 1920s, industrialist funding undergirded not just implicitly and explicitly racist social services projects, but also pseudo-scientific attempts to purify the American populace. (Both the Carnegie Institute and the Rockefeller Foundation devoted funding to the new

discipline of eugenics.¹⁰) Unsurprisingly, not all migrants found Protestant Progressive Era service projects to their liking. Some, such as Inayat Khan—an Indian Sufi musician who toured the United States from 1910 to 1912—re-deployed the language of “service to humanity” to assert the civilizational superiority of their own traditions.¹¹ Others, both immigrants and freed slaves, created organizations to aid co-religionists or co-immigrants. These included the Jewish Social Service Association (known as the United Hebrew Charities until 1926) and the mutual aid societies that Bosnian Muslims created in turn-of-the-century Chicago and that Arab Muslims later created in Detroit.¹² While these mutual aid societies filled important functions by providing populations alienated by Progressive Era programs with services ranging from health care to burial plots, involvement in such organizations did not afford racial and religious minorities the grounds to claim that they contributed to the larger American society in the ways Protestant reformers and social workers did.¹³

World War I marked a significant turning point for the ways religion and service were defined, initiating a process by which the two became indelibly intertwined in legislation and popular culture. Political, business, and more popular leaders during the “war to end war” stressed military service as a potent means of demonstrating model citizenship. Their emphases on service—and, more importantly here, governmental responses to those who refused combat—inaugurated the first of several twentieth-century periods in which “community service” engagements became a means of regulating and assimilating religious minorities into the mechanisms of the state.

The 1917 Selective Service Act, passed to marshal forces for World War I, instituted the first universal draft in U.S. history and included a mandate for “all male citizens” between the ages of twenty-one and thirty-one to register for military service. Previously, each state marshaled its own armies or militias and propertied whites often sent others to battle in their place. Under the 1917 law, however, substitutions could not be sent or bought, and the only exemption allowed (aside from essential occupations and care for dependents) was for certain religious “Conscientious Objectors”—including Anabaptists and Quakers, but not Seventh Day Adventists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or socialists.

In response to the 1917 act, the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) created the Friends National Service Committee (later renamed the American Friends Service Committee, AFSC) to organize “alternative service” programs for objectors. Rather than dissolve the organization after the war, the AFSC expanded its mission to providing social services

in urban areas and providing relief services more broadly in Europe. The U.S. government (which first used humanitarian aid as a foreign policy tool during World War I¹⁴) had allowed the AFSC to work alongside the Red Cross in France during the war, provided they did not promote pacifism or proselytize, but AFSC leaders avoided Germany—a decision they made so as to appear more patriotic, and a situation that only changed when Hoover commissioned them to provide aid there after the war's end.¹⁵

Throughout the war, service was promoted as the great equalizer that brought men of different religious traditions together in their common national identity under a common God, and Protestant organizations set the tone for how religious groups were to participate. Two developments gave particular force to this new emphasis on service ethics and the performance of national citizenship: the Wilson administration's wartime efforts to forge a common moral culture across Americans' religious differences and the birth of a new genre of war-related work called "community service."

In the Service of Citizenship

Americans had long been scandalized by the ways soldiers acted when away from home. President Wilson had received scathing letters about troop comportment after the build-up of American forces on the Mexican border in 1916, and, with U.S. involvement in Europe imminent, the War Department sought to provide sailors and soldiers with opportunities for wholesome entertainment and personal moral improvement. In attempts to prevent drinking, gambling, prostitution, and other such activities, the War Department created a Commission on Training Camp Activities (CTCA) and assured citizens that their sons and husbands would not return from combat corrupt. Instead, service members would be made into better men through religion—a hardly surprising project, coming from the liberal Protestants who staffed Wilson's cabinet.

Administration members such as Raymond Fosdick—brother of Protestant minister Harry Emerson Fosdick and a pacifist social reformer who had directed John D. Rockefeller, Jr.'s, Bureau for Social Hygiene until appointed chair of the CTCA—also saw in the immediate national crisis a means of solving longstanding social problems. "As men and women, soldiers and civilians, pulled together to improve themselves and their nation, adherence to common values would eliminate the competing loyalties and parochialism that divided Americans along the lines of class, race, ethnicity, region, and religion. Out of the war

effort would emerge a new American citizen, loyal first and foremost to the nation and united with other citizens through shared values."¹⁶

Fosdick's CTCA undertook this unifying and civilizing endeavor with a two-pronged strategy: providing educational activities within the camps to improve both morals and morale and creating a distinct branch of the War Department to work outside of the camps, promoting wholesome entertainment and keeping unsavory groups out of communities near bases. This latter segment of the War Department was named War Camp Community Service. Quickly realizing that their objectives for the CTCA required significant material assistance and volunteer labor, Fosdick and his colleagues enlisted the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) in their cause. Not long after, other religious organizations clamored to be involved.¹⁷

While Wilson administration members intent on forging common national ethics through religious—if not racial—integration trusted the Protestant YMCA to meet all service members' moral needs, their confidence was not shared by religious leaders of the populations that Protestant reformers usually targeted. The YMCA *did* initially assure U.S. officials that it would provide recreational and educational services to members of all traditions. When it failed to allow any Catholic representatives on its National War Work Council, however, Catholics protested. The War Department then allowed the Knights of Columbus—a Catholic fraternal organization that had supported U.S. efforts during border tensions with Mexico in 1916—to offer services similar to those of the YMCA, while a group of U.S. archbishops formed the National Catholic War Council to oversee military-related issues.¹⁸ Not to be excluded, leaders of prominent Jewish organizations gathered to address the noticeable lack of services available to Jewish troops in the new conflict. They founded the Jewish Board for Welfare Work in the United States Army and Navy, shortening its name to the Jewish Welfare Board (JWB) by 1918, and successfully lobbied Secretary of War Newton Baker to be the primary volunteer contractor for Jewish servicemen. The JWB effectively took over the disparate tasks previously provided by the Army and Navy Branch of the Young Men's Hebrew Association, a Jewish organization founded in 1913 to provide an alternative to the YMCA's social services and that was also previously active on the Mexican border.

Both the Knights of Columbus and the Jewish Welfare Board worked hard to demonstrate that their religious traditions fostered progressive morals and patriotic morale just as much as Protestant ones did. In a 1918 article in the *New York Tribune*, the JWB explained that it was a "win-the-war organization that is helping the United States government to build up the morale of more than 100,000 Jewish

men in the Army and Navy” and that—most important—their work did “not conflict or duplicate that of the Y.M.C.A., K. of C. [Knights of Columbus], War Camp Community Service or any other welfare agency. The Jewish Welfare Board has a place of its own in camp life,” the organization insisted. “It steps in where the other agencies would be less effective and it works with the other agencies, making the Jewish contribution to the larger welfare programme of the country.”¹⁹ True to its word, the JWB even offered classes on how to Americanize to poor Jews and recent immigrants serving in the military.²⁰

The federal attempt to enlist religious organizations in the war effort was hugely successful—at least, as far as using volunteers to fund and supply federal government services was concerned. The work of the War Department’s own War Camp Community Service proved miniscule in terms of staff and budget compared with the enormous efforts of the YMCA, YWCA, Knights of Columbus, and JWB. Yet, despite this massive mobilization of volunteer labor and private funding, Fosdick’s attempt to create a common moral culture seemed less than effective to War Department officials. Although the religious service organizations professed unity, neutrality, and cooperation, the War Department found that political posturing and competition for adherents had undermined rather than uplifted service member morale. Consequently, after the conflict ended, War Department officials dissolved the CTCA and encouraged the different organizations that had participated in the war effort to offer their services instead to veterans and to the larger communities, which most did.²¹ Like the JWB, the National Catholic War Council—having “instilled in Catholics in the U.S. a consciousness of their resources and their responsibility”—transitioned from war work to social work under a new name (the National Catholic Welfare Council).²² Ultimately, although inter-religious rivalries in the CTCA disappointed Fosdick, his effort to unify disparate Americans through common progressive values—specifically, a reformist, Americanizing impulse expressed through the ethic of service—can only be seen now as successful.

Not only had various religious minority groups competed for the privilege of performing war-related service work during World War I, the volunteer associations were so eager in their endeavors, so effective in promoting their respective causes, that the War Department was able to outsource most of its “community service” work to them by World War II. The one caveat the government issued on the eve of that second conflict, as I discuss below, was that the respective groups would have to learn to work together. Not content to leave the various religious organizations alone with such an important task, officials in both the Roosevelt and Truman administrations aggressively promoted

the idea of “Judeo-Christian” heritage and identity and created ways for Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish Americans to enact it through service—both combat and community-related.

In the meantime, with the American citizenry far from homogenous after World War I, some progressives redoubled their efforts to assimilate certain elements of the population. For one editor of the *New York Times*, the new project of community service assumed the same importance as other kinds of social work. Claiming to represent the views of “thoughtful men,” the writer argued that the War Camp’s Community Service work “should be extended to the whole American people.” Like Wilson, Fosdick, and other leaders who had attempted to fashion a national moral and political culture in the great crucible of war, the *Times* editor pleaded with readers to understand the imperative of consolidating the citizenry by extending military initiatives into peacetime. The “Americanization of the foreign-born is to be the concern of Community Service,” he argued, and in lofty prose reasoned that the very fate of the country, if not the world, depended on Americans, “native and foreign born,” becoming “truly democratic in thought and deed and service, members of one great family of freemen, which cannot be until they understand one another and keep step in the march of progress.”²³

Military Metaphors and the Making of Judeo-Christians

During the 1920s, as many peace churches and populations that had undertaken wartime service devoted energy to other community needs, immigrant and black American groups continued to organize mutual aid societies—ones that became ever more important when the prosperity of the “Roaring Twenties” collapsed and the United States entered the Great Depression. In the 1930s, President Roosevelt used federal funds to put millions back to work. He created civilian service programs and, using the patriotic reminder of U.S. wartime success, titled some with the military metaphor of “Corps” (such as the “Civilian Conservation Corps”: the largest federal work program of the 1930s). For those who could not work (the elderly, the disabled, and widows with children), Congress passed the Social Security Act of 1935. For some, financial aid provided as a result of New Deal legislation began to reduce the need for religiously organized social services. According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, however, the exemptions built into Social Security and Disability Insurance made the Social Security Act like “a sieve with holes just big enough for the majority of Negroes to fall through.”²⁴ Agriculture, for

example, which was primarily nonwhite, was excluded, as was domestic work (an occupation undertaken almost exclusively by women, and in which almost two-thirds of working African American females were employed).²⁵

As they had during World War I, political leaders gave white ethnic religious minorities the opportunity to prove their national loyalties through service in the 1940s, but this time in more carefully crafted ways. Prior to entering World War II officially, Congress passed the Selective Training and Service Act of 1940, thereby instituting the first peacetime draft in U.S. history. The act included greater provisions for religious conscientious objectors than World War I legislation had, and an official organization for “Civilian Public Service” (CPS) followed in 1941. Rather than engage in alternative service, as did members of peace churches, some marginalized Americans rejected the fight in any form. Elijah Muhammad, leader of the Nation of Islam, for example, was jailed in 1943 for refusing to register for selective or alternative service, or—as he put it—refusing to “fight a white man’s war.”²⁶ His son, W. D. Mohammed, would follow suit during the war in Vietnam.

Meanwhile, with the recent example of damaging disputes inside the CTCA in mind, the War Department opted to task religious service providers with the same responsibilities they had undertaken during World War I, but under greater centralization. In 1941, President Roosevelt commissioned a joint organization consisting of the National Travelers Aid Association and five different religious groups: the Salvation Army, the YMCA, the YWCA, the National Catholic Community Service organization, and the National Jewish Welfare Board. Thus, the United Service Organization (USO) was born.²⁷ Through this expansion and federal institutionalization of voluntary service organizations (and in the diverse population of enlisted troops—“whites” and “blacks,” though segregated; Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Sikhs, and Muslims), World War II became another watershed for the ways religion, service, and citizenship were defined in the United States. Crucially, though, national leaders did not try to forge just a common (implicitly Protestant) moral culture through this conflict, but a specifically “Judeo-Christian” fusion of white ethnics united against fascism, communism, and secularism.²⁸

All of the USO constituent organizations except National Catholic Community Service had worked with the War Department during World War I to address the needs of their communities. Neither the Knights of Columbus nor the National Catholic Welfare Council participated in the USO because, having already anticipated U.S. entry into the conflict, American bishops created National Catholic

Community Service (NCCS) in 1940 to serve Catholics in the military. NCCS joined the other religious organizations in response to Roosevelt's wartime request, thus repeating a process similar to that which occurred after World War I with the AFSC: once again, an organization that marginalized religious Americans created to meet their own community's needs was assimilated into the workings of the state. Moreover, as the creation of NCCS demonstrates, the military-derived metaphor of "community service" had by 1940 become a key way for minorities to demonstrate their adherence to common ethics and their contribution to U.S. society.

In 1941, philanthropist John D. Rockefeller, Jr., helped promote the USO and simultaneously provided a widely cited framework for pan-religious patriotism. Just after the Fourth of July, in a broadcast appeal for the USO and National War Fund that was later broadly distributed in print, Rockefeller declared that "the rendering of useful service is the common duty of mankind." He described this obligation to serve as required by "an all-wise and all-loving God, named by whatever name."²⁹ While Rockefeller presented military and community service during and after World War II as patriotic labor that should unite all citizens under a common God, other Americans, especially those involved with the military, emphasized not a general religious calling to serve, but a specifically "Judeo-Christian" one.

One crucial proponent of Judeo-Christian identity was Carl J. Friedrich, a German immigrant and influential professor of government at Harvard University who obtained naturalized citizenship during the war and helped to found Harvard's School of Overseas Administration for training military officers. According to Friedrich (a later mentor to Henry Kissinger), democracy was rooted in "Judeo-Christian ethics." What hung in the balance during World War II was nothing less than a Judeo-Christian culture that could stabilize the world.³⁰ Friedrich's and others' World War II promotion of a "transatlantic Judeo-Christian identity" to challenge the anti-Semitic, imperialist designs of Nazi Germany had far-reaching domestic consequences. Although the narrative of Judeo-Christian commonality was initially to form the basis of "a 'multinational' alternative to fascism, communism, and traditional rivalries among European[s]," argues Kissinger biographer Jeremi Suri, a transatlantic Judeo-Christian identity legitimized, and in fact mandated, increased Jewish participation in universities, corporations, and especially the military. It made Jews "white" by outlawing many of the anti-Semitic assumptions about race and ethnicity that had largely excluded them from circles of economic, intellectual, and military power.³¹

The World War II recognition of white ethnic Catholics and, especially, Jews in formerly Protestant-dominated narratives and institutions did seem like progress to many Americans, and certainly was a form of inclusion. Yet some religious minorities still balked at the pressure to assimilate to Protestant forms of national service and public life. Military officers acting under the aggressive campaign to consolidate Judeo-Christian identity (and often acting with supplies provided by the Jewish Welfare Board, NCCS, and other USO constituents) forced Catholic and Jewish service members to act in identifiably religious ways when some had no personal inclination to do so. For Jewish troops, this involved “volunteering” to work on Christmas in an ostensible show of inter-religious unity that allowed Christian members time off, as well as showing up for Jewish services. At one such officer-mandated event, a Protestant minister was the only clergy available to preside over a Passover Seder for two bemused servicemen who—being secular Jews—had no advice on how to proceed.³²

As these challenges indicate, the recognition that wartime service afforded particular religious minorities was often qualified. Still, white ethnic Catholics and Jews were increasingly folded into an expanded national narrative of religious commonality and divine mandate. Jewish traditions were no longer treated simply as the rudimentary foundations of Protestantism, but as co-conscripts in defending morality worldwide. Even the nomenclature had changed with World War II: whereas the U.S. government had previously employed the term “Hebrew” to designate difference, “Jew” was the new term of distinction—one that, for many, indicated “a fluid culture rather than a primordial race.”³³ This reformulated recognition was not universal, however, and Jews and Catholics continued to face multiple exclusions in various social arenas throughout the twentieth century. Additionally, even at their most inclusive, these frameworks left secular Jews without a basis of belonging.³⁴ Nevertheless, despite the ambiguity of their inclusion under the new “Judeo-Christian” national rubric, white ethnic religious minorities found that wartime service to the nation could have very real benefits—ones that helped move many of them out of the resource-poor urban environments where social services were necessary and up through the ranks of the middle class. Postwar political and economic transformations would, again, have a dramatic and lasting impact on Americans’ understandings of their fellow citizens, religion, and “service.”

As after World War I, white ethnic religious minorities and their service organizations underwent profound changes during and after World War II. In 1944, Congress had passed the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act, more commonly known as the G.I. Bill of Rights,

which provided returning servicemen with possibilities of low-interest loans for housing and funding for college, among other things, and helped many formerly working-class and poor families (including the descendants of Catholic and Jewish immigrants) move up the economic ladder and out of the cities.³⁵ As in the 1930s, when the federal government began providing Social Security and Disability Insurance, these 1940s federal programs eased some of the pressures that mutual aid societies once addressed. Unprecedented economic abundance, combined with heightened concern for European refugees, caused some groups—with the U.S. government's financial and logistical support—to shift their focus from providing for needy members of domestic religious communities to providing relief aid overseas, while others concentrated on offering social and cultural activities.³⁶

Importantly, not all mutual aid societies and service organizations changed their focus, as not all people who served the nation during wartime were eligible for the G.I. Bill and not all of those eligible could overcome racial barriers to housing and education. Among those excluded from G.I. Bill benefits were conscientious objectors. Partly for this reason, concerned Mennonites founded Mennonite Mutual Aid in 1945 for returning Civilian Public Service workers (those employed in Roosevelt's World War II program) who had not only lost wages or work opportunities during the war, but had had to pay for their own living expenses while laboring on CPS projects. Significantly, Mennonite leaders also recognized the social and political importance of aiding noncommunity members and created Mennonite Voluntary Services for domestic and overseas relief in 1944.³⁷ In 1953, Quaker and Brethren churches joined with Mennonites to create International Voluntary Service. Meanwhile, U.S. Catholic bishops had organized massive aid campaigns for European refugees by establishing Catholic Relief Services (initially called "War Relief Services" and funded partly by the National War Fund) in 1943.³⁸

With the narrative of "Judeo-Christian" commonality taking root in popular culture by the 1950s and the federal government contracting with religious minorities' organizations to provide domestic and international services, it would seem that Jews and Catholics—many now middle class—*had* successfully gained recognition and acceptance through their community service work. The 1960 election of the nation's first Catholic president could also be seen as proof of this trend. Yet, as the controversies over that election and over John F. Kennedy's attempts to integrate Catholics into federal service programs reveal, such acceptance was neither unequivocal nor inevitable. The history of Kennedy's attempts to involve Catholic Relief Services

in the Peace Corps provides a cautionary tale for Muslims attempting to replicate Judeo-Christian inclusion.

Protestant-Catholic-Jewish Competition, Continued

On September 12, 1960, Kennedy, then the Democratic Party's presidential nominee, sought to reassure the predominantly Protestant populace that his Catholicism posed no threat to the country's security or heritage. Standing before the Greater Houston Ministerial Association and speaking about the role of religion in public life, Kennedy delivered one of his most famous speeches—one that gives subsequent generations a glimpse at the intertwined ways Americans understood religion, national belonging, and service at that time, and at the limits of the postwar Judeo-Christian consensus.

Rather than allowing him to address the pressing issues of communist aggression, continued domestic poverty, and a second-place status in the space race, Kennedy lamented, his opponents' attempts to inspire fear of Catholic tyranny forced him to reassure the public repeatedly that he would not serve at the behest of the pope. To demonstrate his simultaneous commitments to civic religiosity and to "an America where the separation of church and state is absolute," Kennedy echoed Protestants who promoted secularism so as to block tax dollars from funding Catholic education. "I believe in an America," he assured the Protestant ministers, "where no church or church school is granted any public funds or political preference."³⁹

The school controversy to which Kennedy referred was at least a century old by this point. When what have since become known as the "Great School Wars" first started, nineteenth-century Catholic (and sometimes Jewish) immigrants objected to the use of Protestant scriptures and prayers in public schools and sought to shield their children from Protestant proselytizing under the guise of common education. Instead of removing such scriptures or prayers from the curriculum, Protestant school board members in Philadelphia, Cincinnati, and elsewhere often *required* such scriptural readings while simultaneously accusing Catholic schools that sought public funds of violating the separation of church and state. Protestant groups had repeatedly and selectively appealed to the ideal of secularism over the course of the subsequent century—not to limit the power of religion in public life, but to limit the public power of Catholics.⁴⁰ Whatever bonding had occurred between Protestants, Catholics, and Jews during World War II had not changed this.

In speaking so frankly of the challenges that caused him to address the ministerial association, and then immediately referring to

the school controversy, Kennedy was acknowledging that Catholics were still not as accepted in the Protestant-dominated country as World War II narratives of Judeo-Christian commonality would suggest. In case anyone missed his point, he finished his brief monolog on the America he believed in with a reminder of the touted ideal yet to be achieved: "Finally, I believe in an America where religious intolerance will *someday* end." For those who still doubted his national fidelity, Kennedy cited the ultimate proof of his patriotism: service.

[T]his is the kind [of America] I fought for in the South Pacific, and the kind my brother died for in Europe. No one suggested then that we may have a "divided loyalty," that we did "not believe in liberty," or that we belonged to a disloyal group that threatened the "freedoms for which our forefathers died."

Catholics had served in every conflict from the Revolutionary War to the Alamo, Kennedy insisted. Four months later, in his first inaugural address, Kennedy expanded on the kinds of service that could be considered both evidence of patriotism and a fulfillment of the mission to make "God's work" into "our own." Military service had proven such commitment in the past, but now "the trumpet summons us" to a different kind of service: a struggle against "tyranny, poverty, disease, and war, itself."⁴¹ To encourage such labor, Kennedy launched the Peace Corps—a civilian service program that echoed both the military metaphor Roosevelt had used with the "Civilian Conservation Corps" and the religiosity of the Catholic youth program—the Jesuit Volunteer Corps—begun in 1956.⁴²

Kennedy's election to the presidency did mark a milestone in American history as far as Protestant public power is concerned, but as he soon learned, the end of religious intolerance was not yet at hand. A furor over church-state separation greeted his announcement of the Peace Corps. Trying to protect his re-election prospects, Kennedy had stopped mentioning religion in public (as a senator, he had frequently quoted Catholic theologians) except in moments when he tried to unite all Americans against the specter of communism.⁴³ However, he believed not only that the Peace Corps was an example of the kind of service all religious groups should offer to the nation, but that it could be a weapon in the fight against communist expansion. Accordingly, Kennedy invoked Jesus' Sermon on the Mount when first announcing the program and described the Corps as an endeavor to counteract the hundreds of "missionaries . . . [who are] prepared to spend their lives abroad in the service of world communism."⁴⁴ Despite—or, perhaps,

because of—his attempts to normalize the program by appealing to common religious ethics, historical precedent, and contemporary threats, his proposals were met by additional Protestant insistence on secularism.

Not all Protestants opposed the Peace Corps, to be sure. While liberal Protestants and liberal secularists objected most vociferously to it, those in Kennedy's cabinet worked to minimize dissent. Protestant leaders such as Bill Moyers (an administration official) argued that the Corps was an example of the "importance of service" characteristic of the Baptist tradition.⁴⁵ Wary of the church-state issues already engulfing Kennedy's presidency in its first year, Peace Corps lawyer Morris Abrams sought to appease the program's detractors by mandating that Corps activities—ones initially to be undertaken largely by volunteers associated with Catholic Relief Services (CRS)—involve no proselytizing or aid to parochial schools.⁴⁶ CRS and other agencies readily agreed to these conditions. Still, not everyone believed that the administration would sufficiently safeguard the line between politics and religion—or, more specifically, between government and the Catholic church.

Just days before Peace Corps director Sargent Shriver was to testify about the program before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the *New York Times* ran a front-page story focused on the "Church Issue."⁴⁷ The article's author quoted several Protestant ministers, all but one of whom opposed government funding for religiously organized relief services (a contrast from the era of world wars). Citing comments made on Vatican Radio, the *Times* author highlighted the supposed threat of Catholic infiltration, claiming that of "all the religious officials polled, the Catholics appeared most wholeheartedly in favor of church participation in the Government projects," and noting that an executive assistant of CRS was already staffing a Peace Corps desk in the Washington office of the National Catholic Welfare Conference.⁴⁸

Other Protestant leaders were divided on the issue of government cooperation with religious service groups—or, as in earlier decades, on co-optation of such organizations by the state. Ted Sorensen, Kennedy's speech writer, acknowledged that religious service groups were "doing good work abroad, and we would like to use their facilities," just as the government had commissioned religious groups—including CRS—to provide relief services prior to the Peace Corps controversy. The issue, he lamented, was one of public image more than legal precedent. Bill Moyers and Secretary of State Dean Rusk agreed.⁴⁹ The National Council of Churches (representing mainline Protestant and some Eastern Orthodox churches) opposed the Peace Corps'

arrangements with religious service providers. Meanwhile, concerned for the sanctity of churches more than the secularity of the state, other Protestants opposed the Corps for fear that missionaries performing truly religious service would be “siphon[ed] off” by the government.⁵⁰

As the political and public pressure over church-state separation increased, CRS officials suggested that the Corps contract with a Protestant organization before it contracted with them so as to avoid the appearance of favoritism.⁵¹ The first partnership the Corps formed was with the secular Heifer Project, but this did nothing to dampen questions from Congress about governmental ties to religious groups—questions that seemed to overshadow even the weighty issue of the Corps’ significant cost. During the summer controversy, CRS was informed that its project proposals would be put on hold; by the end of the year, the once-favored Catholic organization realized it would likely receive no Peace Corps contracts at all.⁵²

By the beginning of 1962, reported the *New York Times*, the Peace Corps had decided to refrain from contracting with “agencies that are ecclesiastically controlled.” By then, however, the National Council of Churches had opened an office to liaise with the Peace Corps and to “aid [Protestants] in the *private* practice of their religion while they are overseas.” Simultaneously, the National Catholic Welfare Congress decided to close down the Washington Peace Corps desk that CRS had staffed.⁵³ The implicit message of the *Times* article (with the subheading that read, “Protestants Will Tell Agency of Projects and Will Help Volunteers in Worship”) was that a Protestant-derived secularism would hold sway over the State Department’s Peace Corps operations. This Protestant-derived secularism would allow pious Americans (particularly Protestants) to enact their ethics through civic service, and would simultaneously ensure that no religious agencies (particularly Catholic ones) could accept government funding or imprimatur for their projects. Evangelicals also monitored Peace Corps endeavors for any signs of Catholic favoritism throughout the Kennedy presidency. Thus, just as Catholic Americans reached new heights of institutional and social power—something that should have been uncontroversial in the “Judeo-Christian” America that ostensibly embraced them—many Protestants insisted on secularism in order to preserve their own privilege.⁵⁴ Protestant dominance of American society was not dampened by the greater inclusion of minorities (as twenty-first century Muslim leaders believe and hope will happen again with them). Rather, increased minority involvement sparked opposition from Protestants trying to maintain their privilege. As Catholics attempted to demonstrate their loyalties through service, Protestants and secularists tried to thwart their attempts.⁵⁵

Even prior to the Protestant backlash, Jewish and Catholics differed about whether or not to partner with the government on service projects.⁵⁶ Some Catholics and Jews also appealed to secularism—often to protect their traditions from government interference, rather than to combat the “national menace” of pluralism (as the mainline Protestant magazine *Christian Century* put it in the 1950s) that had begun to erode Protestants’ powerful position.⁵⁷ And there were those who approved of the apparent increasing secularism of the 1960s (when Supreme Court cases resulted in the removal of both Protestant Bibles and prayers from public schools). Others, however, lamented their inability to prove their loyalties through service. As Catholic political theorist Francis Canavan opined in the pages of one of the leading Catholic periodicals in 1963, recent developments had not furthered the cause of true pluralism or Judeo-Christian unity. For him, true pluralism (and patriotism) “permits and encourages private, including religious, institutions of welfare to serve the public as effectively as state institutions do.”⁵⁸

This is not to say that Catholics and Jews did not eventually gain greater acceptance in the United States, only that such acceptance was not the inevitable consequence of a liberal, progressive trend, nor was it solely the result of Catholics’ and Jews’ own efforts to prove their loyalties. Instead, such acceptance often depended on the accidents of only tangentially related domestic and foreign policy considerations. For example, politically conservative Protestants have increasingly employed “Judeo-Christian” terminology since the 1960s—not to express the equality of Jewish Americans, necessarily, but to express evangelical attachments to the state of Israel (a “co-opting” of the term that initially began in response to the perceived increase in secularism under Kennedy and the simultaneous decline of Protestant power).⁵⁹ And Ronald Reagan—who saw Pope John Paul II as an ally in the fight against communism—helped temper American Protestant suspicion of Catholicism in the 1980s by announcing formal ties with the Vatican, thus finalizing a strategic partnership that U.S. presidents had sought since the 1940s, but which had previously been anathema to much of the American populace.⁶⁰

Catholic Relief Services and many other religious service organizations did eventually receive state contracts from an agency created during the Kennedy administration. That agency was the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), established in 1961 to counter communist influences abroad by furthering “America’s foreign policy interests in expanding democracy and free markets.”⁶¹ USAID increasingly partnered with Catholic and evangelical organizations after President George W. Bush issued a 2002 executive order allowing

it to do so. (This executive order expanded the government's ability to contract with religious organizations as per 1990s "Charitable Choice" legislation.)⁶² It is not insignificant that the full *public* inclusion of Catholic service organizations in the U.S. government's domestic and overseas operations has occurred not during the fight against godless communism, but as U.S. officials increasingly focus on a new religious enemy: so-called radical Muslims.⁶³

Conclusion

Will community service projects allow Muslim Americans to demonstrate their patriotism to a largely skeptical public? It is impossible to know for sure. The civil rights movement, affirmative action legislation, and increased immigration after 1965 have indisputably changed the social and demographic profile of the nation since Kennedy's presidency, giving rise to strands of liberal multiculturalism and pluralism, to greater awareness and acceptance of religious diversity, and to an expanded understanding of who counts as "American"—all of which bodes well for American Muslims. These transformations also stoked reactionary backlash, however. Moreover, as I discuss elsewhere, the social gains some Catholics and Jews have made in the decades since have come as much from the efforts of conservative white Catholics and Jews to distance themselves from nonwhite groups and from the specter of foreign influence (European and Latin American communism) as from the expansion of liberal multiculturalism.⁶⁴

Meanwhile, Muslim Americans have struggled to have their service recognized since World War II, proving that such endeavors do not guarantee inevitable or irrevocable inclusion. In the 1950s, Muslim American servicemen of Arab descent, disillusioned by the anti-Islamic prejudice they encountered during World War II, successfully lobbied the Eisenhower administration to create military ID tags ("dog tags") stamped with a crescent to recognize Muslim service members. Some of the same individuals also served as liaisons between the White House and Gamal Abdel Nasser in Egypt. Two decades later, several nationally prominent politicians lauded Elijah Muhammad (leader of the Nation of Islam—a previously disparaged religious group), for encouraging the individual ethics and community service that helped transform inner-city neighborhoods across the nation. Then, during the first Gulf War in the 1990s, Elijah Muhammad's son, W. D. Mohammed (who assumed leadership of his father's organization in 1975), traveled to Saudi Arabia to assure Arab Muslims of the United States' benign intentions. Additionally, he contracted with the military to provide meals-ready-to-eat

(MREs) for use in that conflict. As during previous military campaigns, political elites embraced and lauded the efforts of these religious minorities. The White House and State Department both began holding iftars (celebrations at the end of daily fasting during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan) in the 1990s and, for the first time, an imam was invited to deliver prayers on the floor of Congress.⁶⁵ Despite their services, however—and due as much to U.S. military campaigns in the Middle East over the last fifty years as to the tragic events of 9/11⁶⁶—Muslim Americans continually find themselves depicted as alien to America and pressed, by political leaders and by the non-Muslim general public, to demonstrate their loyalties and ethics.

Shortly after taking office in 2009, President Obama established the White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships to replace George W. Bush's Office of Faith Based and Community Initiatives (OFBCI), which Bush established in 2001 to facilitate his policy of "compassionate conservatism" (accomplishing social good by replacing "government bureaucracy" with "neighbors serving neighbors").⁶⁷ In modifying the office, Obama added a new advisory board to which he appointed Eboo Patel—the Muslim American founder of the Interfaith Youth Core (formerly, *Interfaith Youth Corps*)⁶⁸ community service organization.⁶⁹ Six months later, in June of 2009, Obama announced the creation of United We Serve—an agency designed to "make volunteerism and community service part of the daily lives of all Americans in order to help build a new foundation, one community at a time."⁷⁰ Unveiling this national service initiative in the wake of the largest economic contraction since the Great Depression, Obama emphasized the need for volunteer labor to turn the nation's fiscal tide. "Economic recovery is as much about what you're doing in your communities as what we're doing in Washington," he explained, "and it's going to take all of us, working together." One can almost hear the echoes of Raymond Fosdick and President Wilson's other cabinet members who seized upon the wartime services religious minorities offered as a means of accomplishing their foreign and domestic aims and of forging a common moral culture across difference.

Following the President's lead in 2009, ISNA leaders encouraged Muslim Americans to participate in the first ever National Day of Service (designated for September 11 of each year—the anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon).⁷¹ The following year, 2010, fifteen Muslim American leaders and organizations (including the three largest North American organizations: ISNA; the Islamic Circle of North America, or ICNA; and the Council on American Islamic Relations, or CAIR) encouraged Muslims across the United States to join the effort under the banner of "MuslimServe"

and to use the Obama administration's website (serve.gov) to search for projects in their areas. The goal, according to their "Call to Action" in 2010 (the year of the "Ground Zero Mosque" controversy and of ISNA's "Nurturing Compassionate Communities: Connecting Faith and Service" conference), was "to turn the tide of hatred" and "demonstrate our core Islamic values and our dedication to our neighborhoods and our country."⁷² Like the Jewish Welfare Board, which argued in 1918 for the importance of their service efforts, Muslim Americans are well aware that they are under scrutiny and even suspicion. "All eyes will be on us this Eid and on 9/11" the 2010 Call to Action read. "Let's show that we can rise above prejudice and hatred and be the kind of conscientious citizens who give back to our country."

The impact of Muslim American community service endeavors on non-Muslim public opinion remains to be seen. As of the summer of 2014, Americans regarded Muslims less warmly than any other religious minority, according to polls conducted by the Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project.⁷³ While Muslim Americans seem undaunted by such polls and may even be inspired to engage in more service because of them, other challenges have proved far more difficult to surmount. In February 2015, three young Muslim Americans devoted to community service were executed by a white neighbor in their North Carolina apartment complex. Speaking after the funeral to a reporter, one local woman expressed her disillusionment and fear. Muslims were told that they would be safe in America after 9/11 if they had "exemplary character" and performed community service acts, she said. The murders of such ideal American Muslim citizens had shredded these hopes for her. "To see that it happened to them means it can happen to anyone."⁷⁴

While such increased service has failed so far to guarantee the acceptance or even the safety of Muslim Americans, it has indisputably helped further the goals of the most recent Republican and Democratic presidential administrations: shrinking the size of government and effecting economic recovery, respectively. This is particularly the case as the U.S. government has cut the amount of federal funding going to service activities since 2011, thereby placing more of the financial burden of caring for disenfranchised and dispossessed citizens directly on other citizens. Muslim Americans trying to follow Catholics, Jews, and other religious minorities in gaining acceptance through service may, like those other groups, find themselves faced with a struggle—financial, physical, ethical, and political—to avoid co-optation from the government as they try to meet the needs of their own communities and make their case for national inclusion.

Local community service has become a primary way for Muslim Americans to live out their religious commitments for other reasons, as

well. For example, many fulfilled religious duties by giving to international charitable organizations in the past, but legislation passed in the wake of the 2001 terrorist attacks has made this much more difficult and even dangerous. While only a handful of Muslim charitable organizations (mostly those operating in the Hamas-controlled region of Gaza, where engaging Hamas is required to deliver aid) have been convicted of aiding “terrorist groups,” Muslim Americans fear giving to any charity that the U.S. government may one day decide to criminalize and prosecute. Intentionally or not, the effect of such legislation and fears has been to reduce the flow of money and voluntary labor going to international Muslim communities and increase the amount of both going to aid U.S. communities in distress.⁷⁵

The greatest obstacle to the broad acceptance of Muslims in the United States is not their supposed lack of moderation or lack of service to community. Rather, it is the continued specter of Islamic terrorism stoked by politicians such as the contenders for the 2016 Republican presidential nomination and the attention given to militant groups such as ISIS (the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria)—an organization whose leaders met while imprisoned in a U.S. detention center in Iraq and who formed a violent militia bent on ridding the area of U.S. influence and establishing what they believe is a proper Islamic nation.⁷⁶ ISIS has engaged in a concerted effort to inspire disaffected young Muslim Americans to support them by joining their fight in the Middle East or, short of that, by launching terror attacks at home. While the prospect of such attacks unnerves most Americans—none more than Muslim parents, who worry about predatory attempts to recruit their children online—New America, a Washington research center, confirmed in 2015 what Department of Homeland Security analysts found in 2009: that the greatest threat of violence in the United States comes not from radicalized Muslims, but from the white supremacists and right-wing, antigovernment domestic militias who have killed nearly twice as many people as would-be jihadists since 9/11.⁷⁷

Terrorism has never been the province of Muslims, alone. Since the Iranian hostage crisis of the late 1970s, however, American media have focused much more on so-called Islamic terrorism than on the acts of terrorism, foreign and domestic, sponsored or committed by white Americans.⁷⁸ As long as media outlets and politicians gain viewers and votes by stoking fears of Islam, Muslim Americans will continue to face obstacles to acceptance, regardless of how much community service they perform.

Importantly, the answer for those who want to prove their national loyalties through community service endeavors is not to refrain from assisting one’s neighbors or bettering one’s local or

national community. Many devout Muslims (such as those who created the MuslimServe website and who firmly insist, with reference to Qur'anic passages, that God has called them to perform such acts of benevolence) would be reluctant to stop engaging in acts of service even if these activities came at a more direct cost to them. But Muslim Americans who do participate in such service efforts—particularly those involved in federal or other government programs—should recognize that, in addition to proving that Muslims are as patriotic and as concerned about the common good as anyone else, such actions can have other, less desirable ramifications.

If community service renders some Muslims—those who are most economically able to engage in it—more acceptable and more American than others, that will replicate power dynamics at work decades earlier, when marginalized Catholics and Jews gained provisional acceptance by taking up the physical (and, often, financial) burden of providing community services to those disenfranchised and dispossessed by America's unequal laws and institutions. Replicating these dynamics would mean confirming to many dominant Americans their pre-existing ideas about the inherent pathology or inferiority of those whose skins seem darker, whose traditions seem different, or whose economic situations seem like natural consequences of their ostensible abilities rather than the result, centuries in the making, of racist policies and individual prejudice. What Muslim Americans can do, instead—and what they are increasingly doing—is to partner with people whose races, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds are different from their own, and to deliberate jointly (which will sometimes mean awkwardly and painfully) over the best ways to improve their communities, both through service and through demands for justice for those neglected or oppressed.⁷⁹ Doing so involves not just acts of benevolence or charity, but acts of solidarity stemming from the recognition that the fates of all racial, religious, and socio-economic groups—particularly marginalized ones—in the United States are fundamentally connected.

Notes

1. ISNA 2014 Annual Convention Program, "Generation Rise: Elevating Muslim American Culture," 8 (http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:MkwR5beJ6CEJ:www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/51_convention_program_14_web.pdf+&cd=2&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us&client=firefox-a, accessed November 11, 2014). Compare with page 1 of the ISNA Development Foundation's 2013 "Sponsorship

Package" pamphlet for potential corporate donors (http://www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/sponsorship_booklet_csrl_2013.pdf, accessed August 15, 2014).

2. The events of 9/11 challenged the common assumption that Muslim immigrants will follow the same route to acceptance as earlier Catholic and Jewish immigrants, as Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, Jane I. Smith, and John L. Esposito note in their "Introduction: Becoming American—Religion, Identity, and Institution Building in the American Mosaic," in *Religion and Immigration: Christian, Jewish, and Muslim Experiences in the United States*, ed. Haddad, Smith, and Esposito, (Walnut Creek, Calif.: AltaMira Press, 2003), 3. As this article makes clear, however, 9/11 did not dispel that hope.

3. Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam: A New Vision for Muslims and the West* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004). I discuss Rauf's work and the Islamic center controversy in greater detail in Rosemary R. Corbett *Making Moderate Islam: Sufism, Service, and the "Ground Zero Mosque" Controversy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2016).

4. See, for example, Deborah Dash Moore, "Jewish GIs and the Creation of the Judeo-Christian Tradition," *Religion and American Culture* 8 (December 1998): 31–53; J. F. Wilson and D. L. Drakeman, *Church and State in American History* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2003); and J. T. Todd, "The Temple of Religion and the Politics of Religious Pluralism: Judeo-Christian America at the 1939–1940 New York World's Fair," in *After Pluralism: Reimagining Religious Engagement*, ed. Courtney Bender and Pamela E. Klassen (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 201–24.

5. James P. Pfiffner, "Government Legitimacy and the Role of the Civil Service," in *The Future of Merit: Twenty Years after the Civil Service Reform Act*, ed. James P. Pfiffner and Douglas A. Brooks (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000), 15–38; J. Edward Kellough, *Understanding Affirmative Action: Politics, Discrimination, and the Search for Justice* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2006), 21–36; and Eric S. Yellin, *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016).

6. Although the Rockefeller Foundation sought a federal charter at the beginning of the twentieth century, it was ultimately forced to accept state accreditation due to a hostile climate in Congress during the 1911 anti-trust suit. Ron Chernow, *Titan: The Life of John D. Rockefeller, Sr.* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), 314–22, 550–70; quote on 564. On the rise of

“scientific” philanthropy and private foundations, see also Judith Sealander, “Curing Evils at Their Source: The Arrival of Scientific Giving,” in *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, ed. Lawrence Friedman and Mark McGarvie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 217–40.

7. Several historians have documented dominant American liberal Protestant understandings of progress and emphasis on assimilation. Especially instructive here are Tisa Wenger, *We Have a Religion: The 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Sarah Gaultiere, *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and the essays in Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister, eds., *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

8. Josiah Strong, *Our Country: Its Possible Future and Its Present Crisis* (New York: American Home Missionary Society, 1885), 179–82. An anonymous writer for the *New York Times* reported on Strong’s creation of the League for Social Service (“League for Social Service”) on January 14, 1899.

9. Mary Rankin Cranston, “What Is the American Institute of Social Service,” *New York Times* (May 20, 1906). Crucially, for Strong and his social gospel colleagues, such betterment required reforming the lives and habits of both donors and recipients.

10. Joshua A. Krisch, “When Racism Was a Science: ‘Haunted Files: The Eugenics Records Office’ Recreates a Dark Time in a Laboratory’s Past,” *New York Times*, October 13, 2014.

11. Edward E. Curtis, *Muslims in America: A Short History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 29–30.

12. *Ibid.*, 53–54.

13. In fact, with a few notable exceptions like Khan, Muslims affiliated with mutual-aid societies generally did not appreciate the stakes of claiming that their religious traditions supported service to humanity and common ethnics. Most grouped together under ethnic or nationalist terms, rather than in religious ones (Curtis, *Muslims in America*, 68–69). A few exceptions to this trend may be found in Barbara Blige, “Voluntary Associations in the Old Turkish Muslim Community of Metropolitan

Detroit," in *Muslim Communities in North America*, ed. Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Jane Idleman Smith (Abany: SUNY Press, 1994), 381–406.

14. Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011), 76–96.

15. Allan W. Austin, *Quaker Brotherhood: Interracial Activism and the American Friends Service Committee, 1917–1950* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 9–14.

16. Nancy K. Bristow, *Making Men Moral: Social Engineering during the Great War* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 17. See also Weldon B. Durham, "Commission on Training Camp Activities," in *The United States in the First World War: An Encyclopedia*, ed. Anne Cipriano Venzon (New York: Garland Publications, 1995), 159–61.

17. Bristow, *Making Men Moral*, 35–37.

18. On the Knights of Columbus, see Durham, "Commission on Training Camp Activities," 160. Information regarding the National Catholic War Council can be found on the Catholic University of America archives' website under "National Catholic Community Service" (<http://archives.lib.cua.edu/findingaid/nccs.cfm>, accessed January 7, 2013) and in Jay P. Dolan, *The American Catholic Experience: A History from Colonial Times to the Present* (Notre Dame, Ind.: the University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 353.

19. Museum of Family History, "We Supported Our Troops: The Jewish Welfare Board" (available at <http://www.museumoffamilyhistory.com/wsot-jwb.htm>; accessed January 7, 2013).

20. Kerry M. Olitzky, "Jewish Welfare Board" in *The United States in the First World War*, ed. Anne C. Venzon (London: Routledge, 1999), 311.

21. Durham, "Commission on Training Camp Activities," 161. After the conflict, the JWB effectively took over the work of the Young Men's Hebrew Association. The organization is now known as the Jewish Community Center Association (Olitzky, "Jewish Welfare Board," 312).

22. Quoted in Joan Faraone, "The Evolution of the Secretariat of Hispanic Affairs of NCCB/USCCB and Its Contribution to Catechesis for Hispanics/Latinos in the United States" (Ph.D. diss., Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., 2009), 21.

23. Editorial, "Community Service," *New York Times* (June 1, 1919). After World War I, the army assumed nominal control of the organization, simplifying its name to "Community Service" and folding it into the army's offices for Education and Recreation (Bristow, *Making Men Moral*, 81).
24. Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White: The Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 43–48.
25. Alice Kessler-Harris, *In Pursuit of Equity: Women, Men, and the Quest for Economic Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 146.
26. Curtis, *Muslims in America*, 38–39.
27. William H. Young and Nancy K. Young, *World War II and the Postwar Years in America: A Historical and Cultural Encyclopedia*, vol. 1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO Publishing, 2010), 739–40.
28. On anticommunism and antiseccularism as the animating impulse of interreligious coalition building during this time, see K. Healan Gaston, "Demarcating Democracy: Liberal Catholics, Protestants, and the Discourse of Secularism," in *American Religious Liberalism*, ed. Leigh E. Schmidt and Sally Promey (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012), 337–58.
29. Quoted in Rockefeller's biography on the Rockefeller Archive Center website, "John D. Rockefeller, Junior, 1874–1960" (available at <http://www.rockarch.org/bio/jdrjr.php>, accessed July 5, 2011).
30. Quoted in Jeremi Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 59.
31. *Ibid.*, 61.
32. Dash Moore, "Jewish GIs," 39–41; Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, 62–65.
33. Suri, *Henry Kissinger and the American Century*, 61.
34. As Laura Levitt has demonstrated, such framings often provide less room for diversity than they seem and accommodate Jewish Americans only insofar as they remain religious, leaving secular Jews at the limits of liberal Protestant-secular inclusion. See Levitt, "Impossible Assimilations, American Liberalism, and Jewish Difference: Revisiting Jewish Secularism," *American Quarterly* 59 (September 2007), 807–32.

35. Keith Olson, "The G.I. Bill and Higher Education: Success and Surprise," *American Quarterly* 25 (December 1973), 596–610. See also Suzanne Mettler, *Soldiers to Citizens: The G.I. Bill and the Making of the Greatest Generation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Jennifer Keane, *Doughboys, the Great War, and the Remaking of America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001); and on failures of the G.I. Bill, Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006).

36. On the World War II refugee crisis and proliferation of humanitarian aid agencies, see Craig C. Calhoun, "The Imperative to Reduce Suffering: Charity, Progress, and Emergencies in the Field of Humanitarian Action," in *Humanitarianism in Question: Politics, Power, Ethics*, ed. Michael Barnett and Thomas G. Weiss (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2008), 82–83. For the U.S. government's role in encouraging—and funding—religious voluntary organizations to provide services, see Rachel M. McCleary, *Global Compassion: Private Voluntary Organizations and U.S. Foreign Policy since 1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and David C. Hammack, "Failure and Resilience: Pushing the Limits in Depression and Wartime," in Friedman and McGarvie, *Charity, Philanthropy, and Civility in American History*, 263–80.

37. Mennonite Church USA Historical Committee and Archives, "A Century of Ministry: Mennonite Church Programs in Context" (<http://www.mcusa-archives.org/Features/centryofmin-narrative.htm>, accessed February 6, 2011.)

38. Joan Neal, "Transformation from Relief to a Justice and Solidarity Focus," in *The Pulse of Humanitarian Assistance*, ed. Kevin M. Cahill (New York: Fordham University Press and The Center for International Humanitarian Cooperation, 2007), 279–80.

39. All quotes of this speech are from the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum transcript, "Address of Senator John F. Kennedy to the Greater Houston Ministerial Association, September 12, 1960" (<http://www.jfklibrary.org/AssetViewer/ALL6YEBJMEKYGMCntnSCVg.aspx>, accessed October 18, 2013). As Thomas J. Carty discusses, Kennedy had supported funding for Catholic schools while serving as a U.S. Representative from a heavily Catholic Massachusetts district, but reversed course when seeking a national constituency and anti-Catholic lobbyists and Protestant liberals quickly opposed him. See Carty, "Protestant-Catholic Conflict in the United States: The Cases of John F. Kennedy and Ronald W. Reagan," in *Protestant-Catholic Conflict from the Reformation to the Twenty-First Century: The Dynamics of Religious Difference*, ed. John Wolffe (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 188–218.

40. On the school wars and Protestant appeals to secularism, see Tracy Fessenden, *Culture and Redemption: Religion, the Secular, and American Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 60–83.

41. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum transcript of John F. Kennedy, “Inaugural Address, 20 January 1961” (<http://www.jfklibrary.org/AssetViewer/BqXIEM9F4024ntFl7SVAjA.aspx>, accessed October 18, 2013).

42. Kennedy had proposed an updated version of New Deal projects—a “Youth Conservation Corps,” as he called it—as early as 1960. See “Remarks of Senator John F. Kennedy, Lewisburg-White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, May 4, 1960,” in “John F. Kennedy Speeches” at the JFK Presidential Library and Museum (http://www.jfklibrary.org/Research/Research-Aids/JFK-Speeches/Lewisburg-WV_19600504.aspx, accessed October 18, 2003).

43. David Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era, 1953–1965” (M.Phil. thesis, University of Cambridge, June 2012), 13–14, 89.

44. “Speech of Senator John F. Kennedy, Cow Palace, San Francisco, 2 November 1960,” (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=25928#axzz1v1QQM4S6> and quoted in *ibid.*, 92–93).

45. Hoffman, *All You Need Is Love*, 47–48 (quoted in Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 93).

46. Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 103. Despite Kennedy’s campaign assurances, the issue of public funding for Catholic schools again incited fierce debate during his first months in office.

47. *Ibid.*, 106

48. John Wicklein, “Peace Corps Ties Stir Church Issue,” *New York Times* (June 19, 1961), 1–2.

49. Memorandum of Conversation, July 7, 1961, Office of the Director, Peace Corps, Box 19 (quoted in Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 110–11; on Rusk and Moyers, see Allen 111–12).

50. Wicklein, “Peace Corps,” 2; Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 114–16. On the attitudes of NAE officials toward Kennedy, see Carty, “Protestant-Catholic Conflict,” 194.

51. Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 104–5.

52. *Ibid.*, 113–14.

53. John Wicklein, “Church Council Sets Up Office for Liaison with Peace Corps,” *New York Times* (January 5, 1962), 11 (emphasis added).

54. On evangelicals monitoring the Peace Corps, see Allen, “Religion and Politics in the Kennedy Era,” 118. On the institutional power and social positions of Catholics who, by the 1960s, were more likely than white Protestants to go to college and enjoyed slightly higher wages afterward, see Kevin M. Schultz, *Tri-Faith America: How Catholics and Jews Held Postwar America to Its Protestant Promise* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 203.

55. Citing multiple studies, Carty demonstrates that the Kennedy presidency coincided with an unprecedented level of Catholic American participation in philanthropy and civic engagement (“Protestant-Catholic Conflict,” 199), and that service in the Peace Corps was a primary way that Catholics sought to demonstrate their commitments.

56. For some of the unique issues facing Jewish philanthropic and service organizations, see Shaul Kelner, “Religious Ambivalence in Jewish American Philanthropy,” in *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations: Family, Friend, Foe?* Ed. Thomas J. Davis (Bloomington: Indiana University, 2013), 28–49.

57. The *Christian Century* quote comes from Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 10. See Schultz, also, on the activities of American Jewish organizations that favored secularism as a means of protecting their specific interests and traditions.

58. Quoted in Schultz, *Tri-Faith America*, 207.

59. *Ibid.*, 200–201.

60. See Carty, “Protestant-Catholic Conflict,” 205, and William Inboden, *Religion and American Foreign Policy, 1945–1960: The Soul of Containment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

61. From the USAID website under “USAID History” (accessed August 17, 2011, <http://www.usaid.gov/who-we-are/usaaid-history>). CRS and two evangelical organizations, (World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse) have received far more USAID funding than any other religiously affiliated organization over the course of the agency’s history, although—until the passage of Charitable Choice legislation in the 1990s that allowed

religious organizations to deliver services formerly provided by the state (legislation first passed as part of 1996 welfare reform)—this sometimes required creative solutions to objections raised by Congress and members of the public. In 1962, for example, World Vision administrators established an ostensibly nonconfessional branch of operations called World Vision Relief Organization, which began contracting with USAID almost immediately. CRS and other organizations did likewise and quickly regained some of the federal funding they had enjoyed prior to the Peace Corps controversy. See David P. King, “Heartbroken for God’s World: The Story of Bob Pierce, Founder of World Vision and Samaritan’s Purse,” in Davis, *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations*, 71–92. See also David M. Ackerman and Vee Burke, *Charitable Choice: Background and Issues* (Huntington, N.Y.: Novinka Books, 2001).

62. On the effects of Charitable Choice legislation, see Sheila S. Kennedy, “Religious Philanthropies and Government Social Programs,” in Davis, *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations*, 144–167.

63. On USAID’s contracts with religious organizations since 2002, see Liora Danan, *Mixed Blessings: U.S. Government Engagement with Religion in Conflict-Prone Settings* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2007), 18–19.

64. See Corbett, *Making Moderate Islam*. On Muslim Americans and the limits of liberal multiculturalism, see Rosemary R. Hicks, “Between Lived and the Law: Power, Empire, and Expansion in Studies of American Religions,” *Religion* 42 (July 2012): 409–24.

65. Events noted in this paragraph are discussed in more detail in Kambiz GhaneaBassiri, *A History of Islam in America: From the New World to the New World Order* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 228–326, and in Corbett, *Making Moderate Islam*.

66. On the relationship between U.S. foreign interests and domestic depictions of Muslims, see Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters: Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

67. Bush clarified his aims in establishing the OFBCI at a 2008 event celebrating the office. See White House Office of the Press Secretary, “President Bush Attends Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives’ National Conference” (June 26, 2008; available at <http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2008/06/20080626-20.html>; accessed November 11, 2014).

68. Eboo Patel, *Acts of Faith: The Story of an American Muslim in the Struggle for the Soul of a Generation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007): 114.

69. White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Obama Announces White House Office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships," (Feb 5, 2009; available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/obama-announces-white-house-office-faith-based-and-neighborhood-partnerships>, accessed November 11, 2014).

70. White House Office of the Press Secretary, "President Obama Unveils 'United We Serve,' Calls on All Americans to Commit to Meaningful Volunteer Service in Their Daily Lives" (June 17, 2009; available at http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/President-Obama-Unveils-United-We-Serve-Calls-on-All-Americans-to-Commit-to-Meaningful-Volunteer-Service-in-Their-Daily-Lives, accessed August 9, 2011).

71. Islamic Society of North America, "ISNA Newsletter" (August 21, 2009).

72. All quotes from MuslimServe, "A Call to Action: Join MuslimServe National Campaign for Service and Understanding on 9/11" (posted on the ICNA website and available at <http://www.icna.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/MuslimsServeCalltoAction2010.pdf>; accessed November 14, 2014).

73. Pew Research Center Religion and Public Life Project, "How Americans Feel About Religious Groups" (July 16, 2014; available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/07/16/how-americans-feel-about-religious-groups/>, accessed November 11, 2014).

74. Jonathan M. Katz, "Funeral for Muslims Killed in Chapel Hill Draws Thousands," *New York Times*, February 12, 2015.

75. See Shariq A. Siddiqui, "Myth vs. Reality: Muslim American Philanthropy since 9/11," in Davis, *Religion in Philanthropic Organizations*, 203–14, and Kathryn Ruff, "Scared to Donate: An Examination of the Effects of Designating Muslim Charities as Terrorist Organizations on the First Amendment Rights of Muslim Donors," *New York University Journal of Legislation and Public Policy* 23 (March 2006): 447–502.

76. Malise Ruthven, "Inside the Islamic State," *New York Review of Books*, July 9, 2015, 74–77.

77. Scott Shane, "Homegrown Extremists Tied to Deadlier Toll than Jihadists in U.S. since 9/11," *New York Times*, June 24, 2015.

78. McAlister, *Epic Encounters*, 198–234.

79. In February of 2016, for example, ISNA leaders launched a “Striving for Justice” conference tour. The first stop was Ferguson, Missouri, where Arab American social justice activist Linda Sarsour joined Imam Siraj Wahhaj to discuss, among other things, “Creating a Just Society,” “Mercy as a Tool for Uniting Communities,” and the “Role of Masjid Is Promoting Social Justice.” The event ended with a “Community Service Recognition Award Ceremony” during which Wahhaj—the keynote speaker—addressed the issue of creating “Social Justice for Community at Large.” Event information on ISNA’s website (accessed February 26, 2016) at <http://www.isna.net/uploads/1/5/7/4/15744382/isnasttentativeprogram.pdf>.

ABSTRACT This article examines how religious minorities (specifically, marginalized Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and Muslims) have participated in government-affiliated service programs as part of attempts to assert claims to faith in a common God, observance of common ethics, and belonging in a common body politic. Historians have described World War II as—thanks to the interreligious military—a time of enshrining “Judeo-Christian” narratives in culture, legislation, and politics, and of allowing Jews greater access to these arenas than they had experienced previously. While military service is also important here, my primary subject is the service religious groups initially offered as a compliment to military activity but then expanded and generalized—often under government commission—into community care work that relieved the state of the economic burden of supplying certain citizenship benefits or that gave international endeavors a friendlier face. Marginalized white Protestants were the first to offer such services, but other minoritized religious groups followed their example, patriotically echoing military themes throughout the twentieth century when creating “service” organizations and volunteer “corps.” While many contemporary Muslim American leaders believe that community service engagements will help Muslims overcome discrimination by demonstrating that they also make vital contributions to the U.S., several current factors call that possibility into question—not least of which is the history of only partial acceptance earlier religious minorities enjoyed as a result of their efforts.

Keywords: community service, religion, Muslim American, Peace Corps, United Service Organization (USO)